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ABSTRACT

Although the reality of change is ever present, educators are often resistant to it. Three barriers to change in colleges or other organizations are a lack of strategic vision and mission; low commitment, trust, and teamwork; and a bureaucratic organizational culture. Resistance to change can manifest itself in various ways, including regression (i.e., pretending not to know how to perform), lower productivity, sabotage, absenteeism, transfer, and resignation. Causes of this resistance include fear of failure or the unknown, inertia, economic issues related to seniority and job loss through automation, threats to the informal organization of a college, misunderstanding, and poor timing or approaches to change. Division chairs must help faculty identify the need for change and lead the faculty through a process of reflective thinking. For example, suggestions for change often come from businesses that employ students and hire faculty for summer jobs to give them insight into the industry. It is the chair's role to motivate faculty to take such employment and to implement any resulting changes. Chairs should also be aware of the working styles of the individuals in their departments to help reduce resistance to change and to identify spontaneous change agents among faculty who may provide assistance. In planning for change, helpful strategies include providing training, issuing directives, using participative decision making, and implementing a trial period. (TGI)

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SO THEY ARE RESISTANT TO CHANGE?

STRATEGIES FOR MOVING AN IMMOVABLE OBJECT

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CLYDE PERRY

Mr. Perry has been Division Chair for Technology at GateWay Community College for the past year. The Technology Divsion is comprised of manufacturing/machining, automotive, heating, air conditioning, and facilities maintenance. Clyde holds a Masters Degree in Vocational Education from Northern Arizona University and is currently studying for an EdD in Educational Leadership.

GAIL SHAY

Ms. Shay has been chair of the Multi-discipline Liberal Arts Division of GateWay Community College for two years. In addition to teaching in her fields of Spanish and ESL, she has studied and traveled abroad on three continents, and coordinated a Federal Bilingual Vocational Training Program. Ms. Shay holds a Masters Degree from Arizona State University and is working on completing the National Chair Academy's Leadership Training.

ROSEMARY KESLER

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"So They are Resistant to Change? Strategies for Moving an Immovable Object"

Change, Change, Change. At every turn someone is talking about change. The reality is that change is ever present. Our entire Western culture is based on the premise that things will change, improve and progress. Just for a minute think about the changes that have taken place in your lifetime. Take another minute to think of changes in the classroom. . . computers are everywhere and in your students hands is a calculator. That calculator that your students use has more power than the first main frames!

Another reality is that we as educators do not want to change. Pedagogy that was technically sound only a few years past is not sound today. As we were researching this paper, we were told of a teacher who teaches business at a high school in California. This person has been in the position for thirty plus years. In his teaching position he teaches manual adding machines. One may clarify his skills as that of the dinosaur - extinct. His challenge to change was to learn the computer or leaave teaching. We are told that he will retire at the end of this year, but retirement is not the best way , nor the only way to effect change in education.

Patricia Ball, conference keynote speaker at last year's International Conference of Community College Chairs and Deans (2/4/95, Phoenix, Arizona), mentioned three barriers to change in looking at a total organization or college:

1. Lack of strategic vision and mission
2. Low commitment, trust and teamwork
3. A bureaucratic, organizational culture

Resistance to change also manifests itself in many ways among individuals in the workplace, according to Drafke (148):

- Regression (pretending not to know how to perform)
- Lower productivity (slow pace)
- Sabotage (up to and including destruction of property)
- Absenteeism (surprise!)

- Transfer
- Resignation (and early retirement?)

There are many **causes of resistance** to change:

- Fear of failure, of the unknown
- Inertia
- Inconvenience
- Economics (including issues of seniority and automation)
- Surprise (if change comes too rapidly)
- Threats to the informal organization (social relations)
- Revenge
- Misunderstanding
- Poor timing
- Poor approach

Obviously, as chairs we cannot impact all these areas, but awareness of all of them as well as a proactive approach in the areas we can have some control over can mitigate the resistance and ensure that our departments and personnel do not become extinct.

Dewey (Knight, presents a **process of reflective thinking** which applies to the change process:

> **First**, individuals, as they actively move through life, meet up with a problem or a disturbing situation that temporarily inhibits their progress. This situation provides a moment of hesitation, during which the process of thought is initiated as the mind begins to focus on the problem at hand. The **second** step is an intellectualization of what was at first an emotional response to blocked activity. During this phase, steps are taken by the individual to diagnose the situation and to come to grips with the precise nature of the problem, The **third** stage involves an inventory of possible solutions. People let their minds freely suggest every conceivable potential solution to the problem. These possible solutions take the form of "guiding ideas" or hypotheses. Phase **four** is an exercise in responding as the possible solutions of the third stage are conjectured upon for their probable consequences if put into action. The mind operates in a line of thought running from cause

> to effect in an attempt to narrow the choices to the hypothesis that will be successful in overcoming the current difficulty. The **fifth** stage is concerned with testing the most reasonable hypothesis by action to see if the conjectured consequences do in fact occur. If the hypothesis or proposed answer works when applied to the world of experience, then it is true -- truth is what works.

It is the division chair who must help the faculty identify the need for change. It is the division chair who must lead the faculty through the process developed by Dewey. Robert Krugel and Louis Palter, in their book If it Ain't Broke ...Break It! and other Unconventional Wisdom for a Changing Business World, suggest changing roles. That is, step into the position of another faculty and develop a list of improvements (change). Their message is that if the subject being taught was developed by the person teaching , that person can not see the need for change. In other words, change the paradigm.

Suggestions for change, but not the change itself can come from the customers who employ the students. Most companies will employ teachers during the summer , not for their ability to contribute to their bottom line, but to give them insight into the needs of industry. These industry needs should be considered for program or course changes. These changes, or equipment to faciliate the changes may be funded by industry. Again, it is the division chair who, in most cases, work with the faculty to: 1. motivate the faculty to seek employment and 2. help the faculty to make the changes.

If change is a result of a disruption of a state of equilibrium, it is understandable that there are faculty "dinosaurs" resistant to change. No matter how stable we think we are, it can be disconcerting to be surrounded by so much change. We need to find ways to restore a sense of equilibrium, the tenet of systems theory, which maintains that any change in one system or element will affect the others. And it is here that the influence of personality types plays a great part. Resistance to change may stem from the different perceptions and styles that people bring to each changing circumstance. We as chairs can do much to facilitate change through our understanding of ourselves and our preferences and of the others with whom we work. A knowledge of others can allow us to maximize the strengths each member of our department or division brings to the group.

In their book Type Talk at Work, Kroeger and Thuesen, (p. 163) suggest a problem solving model that utilizes the strengths of people's personality types according to the Meyers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator. Although designed for problem solving, the model can be adapted easily to change issues, using the four personality dimensions of sensing, intuition, thinking and feeling. Sensors are the people that need to look at the facts and details, dealing in clear specifics, in other words the real situation. Those who are not sensors are the intuitives, who need to be involved in brainstorming activities to take advantage of their imagination, who can guide us to new paths and solutions. Thinkers can follow that up by analyzing alternatives objectively and examining the cause and effect of actions. Finally, thinkers need to articulate the impact of the change on themselves and others. In change situations, the chair can use this knowledge of faculty strengths to facilitate the change process and restore a sense of relative stability to the department / division (system).

There may also be natural change agents among the faculty members who may be relied upon to assist in implementing change. The first type (adapted from Mauksch and Miller) are the spontaneous change agents: rebels, advocates, catalysts and educators. The second are the planned change agents: implementors and supporters (in other words, they are appointed to help implement change). Advocates and catalysts work to change the status quo when and if there is a need, while educators facilitate change in individuals. Planned change agents are "volunteered" for the job, have the support of administration, often have training for the job and plan out the change carefully.

In planning for change, there are a group of **strategies** or methods to employ (Drafke, 153), depending on the magnitude of the required change--small, moderate or large. These include training, directives, participative decision making, manipulation, a trial period and using a new person. Division or department chairs must also be able to employ strategy in selecting the appropriate strategies.

As complex as the issue of change is, we as division or department chairs must face this challenge. With the proper training, strategies, understanding and use of the strengths of our faculty, we can ensure continually viable, evolving
and dynamic organizations.

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